

SAXON.

A PRIVATE LETTER

TO

PARENTS, PHYSICIANS, AND MEN

PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS.



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I take the liberty of offering for your consideration some views on the spermatic secretion which, so far as I know, have not been hitherto entertained, either by physicians or the public generally.

It is customary for physiologists and writers on the sexual organs and functions to assume that the spermatic secretion is analogous to the bile, pancreatic juice, saliva, and other secretions which are essential to human life, and which when once formed must be used and expelled from the system. The logical deduction from this theory is that to insure the perfect health of every man and boy who has attained the age of fourteen or thereabouts he must expel this secretion at regular or irregular periods, either by intercommunication with one of the other sex or by masturbation, unless the secretion passes away by the bladder or by involuntary action during sleep. A further deduction is that there exists a natural necessity for unrestricted intercommunication between the sexes, or, since society will not sanction that, the estab

lishment of houses of prostitution. Now the moral nature and finer sensibilities of both men and women protest against such a conclusion, and therefore the truth of the theory which gives rise to it is to be doubted. For myself I consider that to this theory, so generally believed, is due a large part of that sexual immorality which turns the heaven of the affections into a hell of the passions, and is destroying at once the vitality and happiness of our race.

“As a man thinketh, so is he.” This is classic truth. If a boy obtains the impression, from books or from companions older than himself, that at the age of fourteen or fifteen the spermatic secretion is necessarily formed and accumulated, and that too without his knowledge, volition, or power of prevention, and that in order to keep his health he must in some way periodically throw off that secretion, his actions will immediately begin to correspond with his belief.

The comparison by medical men of this secretion with the bile, gastric juice, &c., fixes this theory in his mind and confirms him in his pernicious habits. But substitute the word “tears” for bile, and you put before that boy’s mind an altogether different idea. He knows that tears, in falling drops, are not essential to life or health. A man may be in perfect health and not cry once in five or even fifty years. The lachrymal fluid is ever present, but in such small quantities that it is unnoticed. Where are the tears while they remain unshed? They are ever ready, waiting to spring forth when there is an adequate cause—but they do not accumulate and distress the man

because they are not shed daily, weekly or monthly. The component elements of the tears are prepared in the system, they are on hand, passing through the circulation, ready to mix and flow whenever they are needed; but if they mix, accumulate, and flow without adequate cause—without physical irritation or mental emotion—the physician at once decides that there is a disease of the lachrymal glands. It is my belief that tears and the spermatic fluids are much more analogous in their normal manner of secretion and use than is the bile or gastric juice and the semen. Neither flow of tears or semen is essential to life or health. Both are greatly under the control of the imagination, the emotions, and the will; and the flow of either is liable to be arrested in a moment by sudden mental action. Also when a man sheds tears there is a subsequent depression arising from nervous exhaustion, consequent upon the violent emotions which caused the tears, and a similar effect follows sexual emission.

Now were men and boys made to believe and feel that it is as degrading for them to allow a seminal emission without rational and proper cause, as it is unmanly for them to shed tears frequently or on trivial occasions, and that, moreover, uncalled-for emission is a destructive waste of life material, the formation of habits of masturbation, promiscuous intercourse and marital profligacy, with all their disastrous consequences, might be largely prevented. The difficulty of dealing with this subject, aside from the delicacy which is supposed to attend its consideration, lies chiefly in the fact that most people

are born with large amative propensities. The sexual license of past generations has engendered a sexual excitability in the present, which can only be counteracted, and even then very gradually, by direct education of the young on sexual ethics and by a general dissemination of knowledge on the normal functions and rational uses of the generative organs.

In beginning thus to educate the people in sexual hygiene, scientists should be very careful to arrive at the true theory on the subject. A theory which tends to bad results, which promises no amelioration of the troubles which now distress humanity, is to be doubted. My heart ached when at the close of a physiological lecture on the "Passions," a young man exclaimed in appealing tones, "What shall we young men do? We want to do right, but our passions are strong, and you doctors don't tell us what to do." Though several medical gentlemen were present not one offered a word to strengthen that young man's will power in the line of continence. Is it not probable that help in ascertaining the normal action of the human organism may be obtained from comparative anatomy and physiology? Suppose the student of nature dissects and examines the sexual structure of the wild deer or ape and compares it with the human. Will not such comparison aid in determining whether it is in accordance with nature's simple, unvitiated law and with human happiness that the spermatic secretion should be formed in such quantity and reproduced so continuously as is now considered natural in man? It is at least pertinent to ask whether, if this

accumulation and mixture of the sexual secretions is found, it is not to a very great extent the result of habit, just as an enormous flow of saliva is consequent upon a cultivated habit of expectorating. Some men will spit a pint a day, others seldom or never spit.

On parents and teachers devolves the duty of preventing the formation of wrong sexual habits in childhood and youth. Besides direct instruction on the subject, children should be early trained to the habit of self-control. The valuable teachings contained in the following extract should be deeply pondered by all who have the management of youth. The writer says: "If there is one habit which, above all others, is deserving of cultivation, it is that of self-control. In fact it includes so much that is of valuable importance in life that it may almost be said that in proportion to its power does the man obtain his manhood and the woman her womanhood. The ability to identify self with the highest parts of our nature, and to bring all the lower parts into subjection, or rather to draw them all upwards into harmony with the best that we know, is the one central power which supplies vitality to all the rest. *How to develop this in the child may well absorb the energy of every parent; how to cultivate it in himself may well employ the wisdom and enthusiasm of every youth.* Yet it is no mysterious or complicated path that leads to this goal. The habit of self-control is but the accumulation of continued acts of self-denial for a worthy object; it is but the repeated authority of the reason over the impulses, of the judgment over the inclinations, of the sense of duty over

the desires. He who has acquired this habit, who can govern himself intelligently, without painful effort, and without fear of revolt from his appetites and passions, *has within him the source of all real power and of all true happiness.* The force and energy which he has put forth day by day, and hour by hour, is not exhausted nor even diminished. On the contrary, it has increased by use, and has become stronger and keener by exercise, and although it has already completed its work in the past it is still his well-trying, true, and powerful weapon for future conflicts in higher regions."

In the earlier stages of the world's history conditions aside from sexual needs caused woman to become the slave of man. Had the sexes remained as they came into being, equal and free, with full liberty of choice and refusal in sexual relations, with equal liberty of advance and repulse in every one of the many steps by which love proceeds from the glance of an eye to that intercommunication which is primarily, and, as I think, solely intended for the production of offspring, there is reason to believe that this free communion of man with woman would, by equalizing the sexual forces, have prevented that excessive desire for intercommunication which has possessed man through all recorded time, and which amounts to little less than a mania afflicting the whole race.

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